keep up my usual activities, as well as some specific exercises to relieve back pain. Is there a known link between cycling and sciatica? Would changing the saddle on my bike help? Would an electric bike help? I am a generally very healthy and active 73 year old.
Caroline Starkey

A Sciatica is due to irritation of the sciatic nerve to the leg somewhere along its course from the spine downwards. Your long bike ride may have bruised the nerve. This is more likely if you are riding with a long reach forward on drop bars. A more upright position will help, and the saddle might indeed be a factor here. If altering this doesn't help then you may need to consult a physiotherapist for diagnosis. You may have some arthritis in your lower back, or other cause of nerve pinching.

Exercises to strengthen and mobilise your lower back and pelvis should help, as should anti-inflammatory painkillers if you can take them. As ever, once the pain has settled, start cycling again gently and increase cautiously while continuing the core exercises. If this doesn't work you may need to seek further help.

An e-bike might allow you to cycle without as much effort but getting the right riding position is most important. Keep cycling to stay healthy and active!
Dr Kate Brodie

Technical

Stuck seatpost

Q Our son's carbon frame road bike, a Moda Molto, had sat unused in our garage for a while. When he came to use it again, we found it impossible to move the alloy seatpost as it had somehow bonded to the carbon frame. We've tried to remedy the problem – freezing the seatpost with a proprietary spray, taking the bike to an experienced mechanic, and riding it with the clamp loosened in the hope that vibration may work things loose. But we've had no joy. Is there any remedy out there that can leave us with an intact frame?
Phil Keynes

A Unfortunately aluminium is, when used in contact with carbon fibre, highly susceptible to galvanic corrosion in the presence of water. The resulting aluminium hydroxide – the white powdery substance that forms– takes up much more space than the original aluminium. This material expansion has the same effect as tightening a clamp bolt and, in the case of an aluminium seatpost in a carbon fibre frame, or vice versa, jams the post in the seat tube. There's no 'bonding' effect as the powder has no mechanical strength.

If severe enough, the formation of aluminium hydroxide can split the seat tube, but in any case there's no easy way to relieve the pressure, which is why a stuck post is so hard to remove. You don't have the option with a carbon fibre frame of melting the post out, nor is it wise to risk damage to the carbon fibre matrix by attempting to cut a slot in the post. There are numerous videos online showing techniques such as using a slide hammer to jolt the post out. If you don't feel confident trying this, try a professional service such as **theseatpostman.com**. In future, use a suitable mounting paste (above right) to prevent corrosion.
Richard Hallett

Left: Alamy

Legal

Temporary traffic lights

Q I was cycling to Llandeilo recently when I stopped at some temporary traffic lights, setting off when the lights turned green. The coned section was lengthy and uphill, which meant I had not reached the far end before a car came towards me. The driver was as shocked to see me as I was him. I returned to the contractors (Openreach) to point out the red-light timing was insufficient to allow a slow-moving bicycle to get through. They were polite and said they were just following Welsh Government guidelines. My question is: had I been injured, who would have been held responsible – the Welsh Government, the contractors, the motorist or myself?
Brian Parry

A The old code of practice ('Safety at Street Works and Road Works') concludes with the sentence: "Remember to allow for cyclists and horse riders who travel slower than motor vehicles." It refers users to another publication for detail (The Pink Book), but that was withdrawn in October 2023 with immediate effect. It was replaced with 'Guidance on the Use of Portable Signals', including considerations of active travel and appropriate timing adjustments (Section 19) for cyclists, factoring in gradients. It appears likely that the new revisions hadn't filtered down to the contractor at the time of your episode.

In answer to your specific question: a green light means "you may go on if the way is clear", so the signal did not give the driver carte blanche to proceed. We're talking of speed appropriate to the circumstances and causative potency (the bigger you are, the more damage you will cause), so had a collision occurred the driver's speed and actions would have been scrutinised.

There would also have been a detailed review of the programming of the lights to ascertain if the Section 19 guidance had been applied correctly. If it had not, then the contractor responsible would have been answerable – with the possibility of a contribution from the driver's insurers if there had been inappropriate speed or a standard of driving below that of a reasonably competent motorist (the test for careless).

I cannot see that you would attract any blame, nor should you.
Paul Darlington

Get in touch

EMAIL your technical, health, or legal questions to *editor@cyclinguk.org* or write to Cyclopedia, Cycle, Cycling UK, Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, GU2 9JX. Cycle magazine cannot answer unpublished queries. But don't forget that Cycling UK operates a free-to-members advice line for personal injury claims, **TEL:** *0330 107 1789*.